

The Washington Times reports on President Obama's decision to transfer at least 70 well-known terrorists from the prison facility at Guantanamo Bay to Illinois:

The Washington Times

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[Gitmo debate moves to heartland](#)

[Matthew Mosk](#)

Critics warned Tuesday that a White House plan to move as many as 100 terrorism suspects from the Guantanamo Bay detention facility to a prison in Illinois could create a new security risk in the American heartland, but the Obama administration dismissed the concerns as "scare tactics and hyperbole."

The announcement that the federal government would purchase the underused prison complex in Thomson, Ill., opened a new chapter in the debate over the future of scores of detainees who have been confined in legal limbo.

Administration officials said the purchase of the prison, which was built in 2001 for \$145 million, would resolve the most vexing political question surrounding President Obama's pledge to shut down the detention facility at U.S. Naval Base Guantanamo Bay, Cuba - finding a secure place to put the world's most dangerous terrorists.

"This will be the most secure facility of all time," said Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn.

White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said it was important to "separate what might be legitimate concern with what is nothing more than scare tactics and hyperbole that we haven't seen in quite some time, even in a glorious town like Washington."

But a number of top congressional Republicans warned that moving the Guantanamo detainees to the mainland poses major legal, security and logistical problems.

"By moving known terrorists to American soil, the Obama administration is putting international public relations ahead of public safety," said Rep. Mike Pence, Indiana Republican and chairman of the House Republican Conference.

"How does closing Guantanamo Bay make us safer?" he asked. **"How does moving over 70 known terrorists to a facility in my beloved heartland of this country make our families more safe? And how does it even make sense?"**

Mr. Quinn estimated that once the federal government purchases the prison from the state, a transaction that has yet to be negotiated, roughly 1,500 federal inmates would be housed there and about 100 terrorism suspects would be segregated in a separate wing that would be overseen by military guards.

National Security Adviser James L. Jones said the transfer would enable the president to close Guantanamo, a move he said would make the U.S. safer and solve a "national security issue of the highest order."

"In taking this action, we are removing from terrorist organizations around the world a recruiting tool," Mr. Jones said.

Sen. Richard J. Durbin, Illinois Democrat, applauded the selection of the Thomson site. He said the move was supported by national security analysts and by more than 30 municipal councils and chambers of commerce in his state.

Their support, he said, was largely because of the estimated 3,000 jobs that would be created by the placement of a maximum-security prison in a region of his state that has more than 11 percent unemployment.

Such a move has long divided Capitol Hill. Even some Democrats have questioned the readiness of the Justice Department to handle the shift.

Speaking on the House floor Tuesday, Mr. Pence said he was "astonished" by the decision.

House Republican Leader John A. Boehner, Ohio Republican, accused the president of putting liberal special-interest groups ahead of the safety and security of the American people.

"The American people don't want dangerous terrorists imported onto U.S. soil," he said.

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